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ABSTRACT

Public schools face many of the same marketing problems found in private-sector organizations. These include reputation building, resource mobilization, personnel employment, program development, client satisfaction, community good will, and public political support. This paper analyzes the marketing concept and illustrates its application to public school educational systems. The following questions are addressed: (1) What is marketing? (2) What market forces exist in education that create bridges or barriers between schools and the communities they serve? (3) Why apply marketing techniques to schools? (4) How do marketers contact the various segments of the community? (5) How do schools attempt to communicate with communities and vice versa? The marketing process is a mechanism intended to draw schools and their communities into productive and supportive working relationships. Within the field of education, however, natural market forces creating such relationships are virtually inoperative, causing inadequate citizen participation and inadequate funding. In order to stimulate a more productive school-community exchange process, the California Educational Research Cooperative (CERC) suggests developing ongoing marketing strategies. (78 references) (LAP)

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EDUCATIONAL MARKETING AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS: POLICIES, PRACTICES AND PROBLEMS

For school people, marketing is all too often associated with the black art of hard sell as practiced by Joe Isuzu, Elmer Gantry or Professor Howard Hill (of trombone fame). Undeniably, this form of selling mentality exists, but it plays a minor role on an otherwise very large stage (Rados, 1981:246).

The public school should not apologize for using sophisticated marketing techniques because it must resolve most of the same types of problems found in private sector organizations, such as: reputation building, resource mobilization, personnel employment, program development, client satisfaction, community good will, and public political support (NSPRA, 1987:8).

The objectives of this paper are to analyze the marketing concept and to illustrate its application to public school educational systems. Drawing upon the research literature, the following questions will be addressed.

1. What is marketing?
2. What market forces exist in education that create bridges or barriers between schools and the communities they serve?
3. Why apply marketing techniques to schools?
4. How do marketers contact the various segments of the community?
5. How do schools attempt to communicate with communities and vice versa?

Within and around the school, information from a multitude of sources (e.g., newspapers, television, research reports, newsletters, "grapevine") regarding the

existing quantity and quality of educational services shapes perceptions and images. These images, as Stough (1982:7) writes, "often become crystallized into attitudes and behaviors which positively or adversely affect their support of school policies, programs and very importantly - budgets."

What image do Americans hold of their public schools? The 1990 Gallup Poll (Elam, 1990:51) asked people to grade the quality of the schools nationally. Twenty percent of adults with no children in school (the group which makes up the largest electoral voting block) gave grades of (A) & (B), while 69 percent gave them a (C), (D) or (F) (the rest marked "don't know"). Twenty-three percent of adults with children in school gave (A) & (B) grades, while 65 percent gave (C), (D), or (F) grades. (Elam and Gallup, 1989:50).

Unfortunately, all too often the information people process in shaping perceptions as reported by the Gallup Poll comes from the mass media; a media which responds to the dictum that bad news drives out good news. That is, the single act of a kinky teacher or a misspelled word on a teacher strike poster gets national coverage and disfigures more realistic school images.

WHAT IS MARKETING?

Because popular images held by community segments (relatively homogeneous groups based on different characteristics such as socio-economic status, religion or ethnicity) count for so much in education, school people must face the same needs as private organizations face -- image modification. The concept of "image" translates

into different outcomes when contrasting its usage in the private sector with the public educational sector. In the private sector, the outcome of an excellent image (e.g., reputation for quality, respected brand name, durability, time saving features) leads to sales that result in profits. In education, the outcome of an excellent image (e.g., quality teaching, effective programs, sound discipline) leads to local political support resulting in the capability of making difficult changes (Easton, 1965). In other words, image building in education really means gaining political support for what the school district is doing or wants to do (Wirt and Kirst, 1989).

While efforts to remove gaps between current and desired images are important, the marketing concept goes far beyond such tasks. The ultimate objective of educational marketing is to draw schools and their communities into mutually healthy and supportive working relationships that improve the productive capacity and quality of both (Gotts and Purnell, 1987; Peary, 1981; Rich, 1988).

Central to establishing this working relationship is the concept of an exchange of valued goods and services between schools and their communities. Introducing a marketing process is the means by which all types of organizations, including schools, create a satisfactory exchange process. Kotler and Fox (1985:7) define the marketing process as:

> the analysis, planning, implementation, and control of carefully formulated programs designed to bring about voluntary exchanges of values with target markets to achieve institutional objectives. Marketing involves designing the institution's offerings to meet the target markets'

needs and desires, and using effective pricing, communication, and distribution to inform, motivate, and service the markets.

An effective marketing process does not emerge out of some inherent organizational instinct. This process must be consciously shaped as part of an educational policy that incorporates a marketing strategy. A marketing strategy represents a cyclical process that not only gathers and distributes information, but also involves changing educational programs in response to that information. In marketing language, educational change is really product design in the face of shifting consumer demands.

One might think that the obvious requirements of school--community exchanges for purposes of educational development would create natural linkages resulting in effective processes of information transfer. As the research literature points out, such is not usually the case.

WHAT MARKET FORCES EXIST IN EDUCATION THAT CREATE BRIDGES OR BARRIERS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE?

Market forces within the private sector drive producers and consumers into an interdependent exchange process. In order to survive, producers must seek out clients and offer products responsive to their demands. Clients, therefore, shape decisively the decision-making process of producers.

In a like manner, market forces motivate the clients. Requiring goods and services they themselves cannot produce, clients seek out producers offering high quality at

reasonable prices (Dalrymple and Parsons, 1990; McCarthy and Perreault, 1987). Do market forces operate in a similar manner between public schools and their surrounding communities?

As will soon be noted, while the natural market forces that drive consumers and producers together in the private sector exist between families and schools, they do so only at a much reduced level. Sara Lightfoot (1978, 1981) is a principal proponent of an argument which sheds some light on this issue. The emotionally charged family-child relationship and the more impartial school-student relationship produce forces that both restrict and enhance the working relationship between families and schools. At the center of the issue is the question, who should be in control of the child's education? (Chavkin and Williams, 1987:178; Ruestow, 1986). Because the response to this question has always been unclear, fully collaborative efforts on both sides is never completely possible.

Norms of professionalism and expertise combined with building configuration to permit teachers to work within their sphere of influence behind closed classroom doors. In contrast, armed with a constant parade of demands large numbers of parents, for example, push to get their students out of one teacher's classroom and into another's, insist on a different set of biology textbooks, and complain to the board of education that English as a second language rather than bilingual education should be offered in the curriculum.

As a means of coping with the seemingly incompatible needs and expectations of teachers and parents, Lightfoot (1978:28) argues, schools tend to organize ritualistic

encounters with families. "Parent-Teacher Association meetings and open house rituals at the beginning of the school year are contrived occasions that symbolically reaffirm the idealized parent-school relationship but rarely provide the chance for authentic interaction."

If there is something that could be called a natural market force in education based on consumer demand, it results from parents seeking to monitor or influence the education of their children, and schools recognizing services and benefits that can be derived from such participation (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Chavkin and Williams, 1987; Epstein, 1986a; Leichter, 1974). In fact, the force can often be so strong that teachers feel the need to be protected from "pushy" parents of high achieving students (Dornbusch and Ritter, 1988:77).

This primary market force, however, tends to be unevenly distributed in emphasis across socio-economic lines, and decreases from elementary through the high school years (Collins, Moes, Cross, 1982; Thornbury, 1981). Parents from higher socio-economic status levels tend to be significantly more involved than those at lower levels (Davies, 1987; Gotts and Purnell, 1986; Newsweek, 1990). In fact, many states are passing parent responsibility legislation (Jennings, 1990) which would not be necessary if the market force for family-school interaction were evenly distributed.

These laws, often criticized as punitive and discriminatory toward minorities and the poor, are intended to force parents to become more involved in their children's development. For example, four states are prepared to fine or jail parents who refuse to attend parent-teacher conferences involving the discipline of their

children. California has authorized the arrest of parents who knowingly permit their children to participate in gang activities, and several states now authorize the cutting of welfare benefits of parents whose children regularly fail to attend school. Fines and jail sentences are often dropped if those charged agree to attend parenting classes (Jennings, 1990:30).

In short, public school systems can be, and often are, very effective in the practice of educational marketing with the assertive and politically influential body of ethnic-majority, middle-class parents who monitor closely the educational process. These individuals inform and are informed. On the other hand, due to the lack of significant market forces, public school systems can easily lose contact with the upper socio-economic classes (their children go to private schools), the uninvolved middle and lower socio-economic classes, and the culturally different.

In the marketing context, along with the consumer demand market force just discussed, comes the powerful market force of competition.

Competition as a Market Force

"What do we think of when we think of competition?" Rados (1981:234) asks. "We may think of Darwin or of amateur sports; or we may think of business, which immediately calls to mind professional sports; but we do not think of a library, a housing authority, or the United States Olympic Committee." Or even the public school, he might have added.

Richard Carlson (1965) identifies private sector organizations as "wild" because they must compete and struggle for resources to survive. Public schools, on the other

hand, receive almost all their funding through average daily student attendance. Carlson (1965:6) writes that:

> They do not compete with other organizations for clients; in fact a steady flow of clients is assured. There is no struggle for survival for this type of organization--existence is guaranteed. Though this type of organization does compete in a restricted area for funds, funds are not closely tied to quality of performance. These organizations are domesticated in the sense that they are protected by the society they serve.

As a "domesticated" organization, the school does not have to "forage for its fodder." That is, the most powerful market force that exists in the private sector, economic survival, does not work to any significant extent with schools. Consequently, the public school, with its captive complement of students and guaranteed economic support, can function as a local monopoly and exist relatively independent of community expectations (Carlson, 1965; Gotts and Purnell, 1986; Kotler and Fox, 1985). For many public sector organizations, including schools, when faced with the uncertainties of a changing world, and "unable to use standard measures of performance, like sales or market share, they are prone to sanctify policies that have worked well in the past" (Rados, 1981; 15).

The important point of this section is not that schools and communities are failing to operate at a healthy level of interactive exchange, because many schools across America do just that. The point is that the powerful and natural consumer-

producer, competitive, and economic survival market forces of the private sector exist only marginally in the public schools. Without natural market forces pressing for and shaping producer--client exchanges, the organization tends develop what market researchers call product and production orientations.

An educational organization with a "product orientation presumes that the school's major task is to offer programs that it believes are 'good for' its clients" (Kotler and Fox, 1985:11). They deal in "impression management" with the objective of making parents feel good about schooling activities independent of whether or not the popular impressions accurately reflect realities (Lightfoot, 1981; Smith and Keith, 1971).

An organization with a production orientation seeks efficiency based on its own terms and is prone to view clients as objects to be treated rather than customers to be served. In contrast, an organization with a customer orientation operates with the outlook of servicing the needs and wants of target markets through communication, product design, proper pricing and the timely delivery of services (Kotler and Andreasen, 1987:41).

Whether or not a school system adopts a product and production orientation or a market orientation can have major consequences for the student. When considering the issue of dropouts, for example, a schools with a product and production orientation focus on what is taught, while those with customer orientations are concerned with what is learned.

An important question becomes, who bears the burden of insuring parent

participation -- schools or parents? Is it enough for schools to provide equal access, therefore placing the burden upon parents to get what they can out of schools for their children? Or, is the burden upon schools to exert the energy, resources and will to go out and draw in the parents? Some insight was gained when a Gallup Poll (Gallup and Elam, 1988:42) reported that "only 25 percent of parents believe that the schools put forth a 'great deal of effort' to involve parents." Sara Lightfoot (1978:42) argues, however, that there can be creative communication and healthy exchanges if "there is a balance of power and responsibility between family and school...." That is, both sides of the educational equation listening to and respecting the culture, goals, norms, individuality and needs of the other as well as their own.

While strong school-community interactive exchanges may not be natural acts in a marketing sense, they are not unnatural either. With market forces operating at minimal levels, the school-community interaction must be motivated by some other compelling reasons. What might they be?

WHY APPLY MARKETING TECHNIQUES TO SCHOOLS?

Even though school systems across the country can, and many often do, function largely through symbolic and ritualistic exchanges with their local communities, there are many reasons why all parties can benefit through serious application of marketing techniques. Two such reasons especially critical at this moment are: (1) special resource needs available only through bond issues or tax levy referendums, and (2) the significant potential for increased student learning.

Educational Marketing and Increased Resources

For numerous observers, the principal fallout from the perception of a growing isolation between communities and the ever increasing complexities of schools (and the declining confidence therein) is the failure of bond issues and tax levies (Newman, 1990; NSPRA, 1987; Tangri and Moles, 1987).

Bond issues, and most forms of local tax levy referendums, intended for educational projects (normally construction of new school facilities) are usually proposed only at irregular times every few years. Thus, these special needs to raise revenues are not constantly in front of voters to the degree that they constitute a natural and continuous market force as described earlier. School people can, and all too often do, market their system in a community-wide effort only prior to bond elections.

The outcome of revenue elections designated for educational purposes has been increasingly disconcerting in recent years. In California, for example, from 1983 to November, 1990 only 33 of 92 (36%) of the parcel tax initiatives were passed. Since 1986, 81 general obligation bond elections were held and 42 (51 percent) were successful. The so-called "Mello-Roos" school district tax levy elections have been successful in 19 of 32 such efforts (59 percent) since 1986 (Munro, 1990). The November, 1990 balloting was particularly discouraging as the electorate approved only 5 of 23 (22%) local revenue raising measures.

States around the nation have had significant problems raising educational revenues. When state aid declines, local communities are asked to pick up the slack,

usually through increased property taxes. In New Jersey and Ohio, for example, voters rejected approximately half of the proposed school district budget proposals largely because of local tax increases or simply an anti-tax revolt (Newman, 1990).

Communication practices associated with special revenue generating elections for education typically do not go beyond the local communities of school districts. However, as a percent of total public school revenues across the nation, only slightly more than 40 percent are from local sources. In California, only 23.5 percent is locally generated with 65.9 percent coming from the state government (NCES, 1989). The implication is that if education is to be funded adequately, not to mention comprehensively, educational marketing must not be limited to the school community but must be carried out aggressively at the state level.

And how well is education marketed at the national level in America? At the "educational summit" in September of 1989, President Bush characterized educational expenditures in the United States as "lavish" and that the focus should not be on resources, but on results. The Bush administration, exhibiting its own marketing strategy, offers international comparison data as proof that Americans are getting less for more.

Using UNESCO and U.S. Department of Education Data, a comparison is made between 16 industrialized nations, which include most of western Europe, Australia, and Japan. When comparing expenditures as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, the 6.8 percent expenditure of the United States places us in an impressive three-way tie for second (with Canada and the Netherlands, but behind Sweden's 7.6 percent).

These numbers used by the Bush administration are indeed impressive but, unfortunately, deceptive because they include expenditures for higher education. How lavish is our K-12 educational effort? When comparing expenditures as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product for K-12 public schools only, the 4.1 percent spent by the United States ranks a low 14th out of 16, edging out only Australia and Ireland. When comparing our K-12 per pupil expenditures as a percent of per capita income, the USA again ranks 14th (20 percent) with Sweden in first (35.3 percent), Austria second (29.7 percent), and Japan 7th (24.1 percent) (Rasell and Mishel, 1990:11-14).

The point is that politicians, generally in response to public sentiment, establish policies setting the levels of educational funding. In order to provide for educational funding commensurate to available resources, effective marketing practices in the hands of educators must take place in the macro-environment of the state and nation as a whole as well as the micro-environment of the community.

When dealing with educational affairs at any level on any subject, ignorance is a consequence of poor marketing. And how well informed do Americans feel about their schools? In a recent Gallup Poll (Gallup and Clark, 1987:29), only 15 percent of the public without children in school felt well informed about public schools in America. In contrast, 55 percent of that same population said they were not well-informed or simply "didn't know." The figures are slightly worse when the same groups were asked about how well they feel informed about their local schools and what is being taught in them.

The lack of <u>specific</u> information about local educational needs has serious

consequences. When Americans are asked if they are in favor of raising taxes to support local public schools because they say they need more money, the 1986 Gallup Poll (Gallup, 1986:51) reported only 37 percent said "yes". Even public school parents were split on the issue with 45 percent "yes" and 46 percent "no."

In contrast, when asked to assess factors that will determine America's strength in the future, 88 percent of Americans responded that "developing the best education system in the world" was very important, while only 65 percent said the same about industrial production, and 47 percent about the military force (Gallup and Elam, 1988:44).

When asked to identify "the biggest problems which the public schools in this community must deal?" the top three by a significant margin were: drugs, discipline and "lack of financial support." Close to the bottom of the list was "taxes are too high." When asked if they "would be willing to pay higher taxes to fund such programs," 68 percent of the national total said "yes" and 25 percent "no," with 7 percent "don't know"

(Elam and Gallup, 1989:46). Significantly, when Americans were asked if they "would be willing to pay more taxes to help raise standards of education in the United States?" 64 percent of the national total answered "yes," and even 61 percent with no children in school answered "yes" (Gallup and Elam, 1988). All too often the poorly informed (or badly informed) who vote against educational funding have been left out of the school--community information flow. Various studies that indicate that even those adults without children in school want to be informed about the local

educational situation (Gotts and Purnell, 1986). Community interest in schools is by no means limited to parents with children attending public schools.

Important conclusions that can be drawn are that Americans don't feel particularly informed about what goes on in schools, and simple requests for more money for education get negative responses. However, Americans believe strongly in the importance of education and are willing to pay higher taxes to get it if informative, clear, and specific arguments are made. That, of course, is the purpose of educational marketing.

Educational Marketing and Increased Learning

The second major benefit of effective educational marketing involves increasing parent participation with the potential for increased student achievement. But does parent participation translate into increased student achievement? Responses to that question range from one extreme to the other. For example, Anne Henderson's (1987:1) noted review of 49 studies and conclusion that "...parent involvement improves student achievement. When parents are involved, children do better in school, and they go to better schools." On the other hand, the Clark, Lotto and McCarthy (1980:470) examination concludes that "On its own, parental involvement is likely to influence parental attitudes toward school, but is unlikely to affect student achievement, unless other school variables are also manipulated."

An important point for educational marketing is that sorting out where to invest limited time and energy is not simple, but guidance can be found in the

literature when the problem is broken down into more basic component parts. To be more specific, there are at least four forms of parent involvement (Brandt, 1989:25; Fantini, 1980; Fullan, 1982):

1. parents involved in the classroom (e.g., volunteers, aides).
2. school governance (e.g., parents participating in decision-making).
3. home learning (e.g., parents as home tutors).
4. school visitation (e.g., attending PTA or back-to-school night).

Associated with all four areas is a special need to involve the economically disadvantaged and those with limited English proficiency.

Parents Involved in the Classroom. The clearest evidence about parent participation in the school impacting on student achievement comes when parents work directly in the classroom as aides, volunteers or visitors (Armour, et al., 1976; Becker and Epstein, 1982; Epstein, 1986b; Olmsted and Rubin, 1982; Tangri and Moles, 1987; Wellisch, et al, 1978). These parents learn not only about teaching methods, but also specifics about the curriculum, textbooks, the daily homework assignments, as well as the culture of the school, and which teachers are particularly strong (or weak) in which subjects.

The "in class" experience has the most significant impact on parents with limited familiarity with the American system of education. Parents who participate in the classroom are more inclined to help their children at home and have the specific information to do so effectively (Gotts and Purnell, 1985; Iverson, et al., 1981).

Developing school policies and a marketing strategy that will bring more

parents directly into contact with the teaching-learning process may be an important component in an overall marketing strategy, but there are natural barriers on the part of teachers and parents that will have to be dealt with. Teachers, especially in the upper grades, often do not feel that parents have sufficient training and skill to make classroom contributions to the learning process. These same teachers may have over 125 students a day, and the logistics of coordinating parent activities in support of the instructional process can make a teacher feel overwhelmed. In addition, differing views with visiting parents about classroom discipline, classroom organization and task assignment can make everyone, including the students, feel uncomfortable (Becker and Epstein, 1982; Moles, 1982, 1987; Tangri and Moles, 1987:520; Ruestow, 1986).

Interestingly enough, while many teachers feel that parents are not particularly well prepared to participate in curriculum development, a Gallup Poll (Gallup, 1984:38) has pointed out that parents do not necessarily agree. When asked "who should have the greatest influence in deciding what is taught in public schools here," 29 percent of the parents responded "school board," 22 percent responded "parents," and 11 percent "teachers."

Parents Involved in School Decision Making. A second form of parent participation takes place outside the classroom. That is, participation in school governance activities, usually as members of advisory councils. Little evidence exists that parent participation in advisory councils translates into increased levels of learning for their children (Fantini, 1980, Fullan, 1982, Gotts and Purnell, 1986).

However, this may be the case because there tends to be a sharp division

between the types of decisions in which public school parents are permitted to engage and those in which they would like to engage. Parent advisory council activities tend to be controlled by the principals and directed toward issues and projects that have limited impact on the course of school affairs, such as fund raising, increasing parent attendance at school functions, informing parents about school instructional matters, choosing student discipline methods, and determining homework policies.

Principals and teachers tend not to welcome parent involvement in substantive decisions involving the school budget, principal and teacher hiring and firing, curriculum decisions, and classroom evaluation of teachers (Chavkin and Williams, 1987; Lucas, Lusthaus, and Gibbs, 1978-79; Melarango, et al., 1981:3).
However, the evidence is quite clear that these same administrative, personnel, and curriculum decisions are the ones in which parents want most to participate (Chavkin and Williams, 1987:173-77; CEE, 1977:35; Elam and Gallup, 1989:47).

Parents are also well aware that they are being shut out of these major decision-making areas. When parents were asked a series of questions in a Gallup Poll (Elam, 1990:45) about how much say they have in local public schools regarding curriculum decisions, hiring administrators and teachers, and making salary decisions, from 70 to 80 percent replied "very little" to "almost none."

An important element in an educational marketing strategy intended to increase the degree of parent participation would be to open up the range of decisions to include those in which parents really want most to participate. While this might be a bitter pill for some educators to swallow, it might be helpful to keep in mind that

because of irate parents, school-based management has become one of the fastest growing governance movements in American education today. An interesting version of school-based management requiring significant organizational revision involves a local parent council for each school becoming an equal or senior partner in making every major academic and administrative policy decision. (Brown, 1990, David, 1989; Hanson, 1990).

Learning at Home. The well known Coleman Report (1966) jolted the nation with its argument that family background (e.g., socioeconomic status, family structure, parents' expectations) account for more of the unique variance in school achievement than do all the schooling inputs put together (e.g., per pupil expenditures, multiple tracking, teacher's level of education). "The continuing debate over the Coleman findings reveals that, although these inferences about school effects are much disputed, those about homes are not" (Gotts and Purnell, 1986).

Clearly, the learning environment within homes impacts significantly, for better or worse, on student achievement within the school (Averuch, et al., 1972; Benson, 1982; Delgado-Gaitan, 1990; Marjoribanks, 1979; Nedler and McAfee, 1979). In fact, in the public perception, a student's family is a considerably more important source of education than school, peers or television (Elam and Gallup, 1989:47; Newsweek, 1990:18). Consequently, there is good reason for schools to utilize marketing techniques to reach families in a manner that facilitates strengthening the learning environments within homes.

The learning environment of a home is not the equivalent of a place on the

socioeconomic index. Rather, it is the sum of the quality and quantity of educationally stimulating experiences provided in the home (Iverson, et al., 1981:394).

On the down side, however, a large Stanford University study (Dornbush and Ritter, 1988) of several thousand teachers, parents and students in the San Francisco Bay area found that 62 percent of the teachers felt that teachers cannot affect the way parents assist in school work at home. As an interesting counterpoint, in a large Maryland study Epstein (1986a:280) found that 58 percent of the parents almost never received requests from teachers to help their students with home learning activities; fewer than 30 percent reported that teachers gave them any specific ideas about how to help at home, and 80 percent said they could spend more time helping their students if shown what to do and how to do it.

School Visitation. While visiting schools, for example, to attend PTA meetings, cheer at football games, or converse with teachers about student progress can be informative and confidence building for parents, their is little to suggest that such acts contribute in a measurable sense to the achievement levels of students.

HOW DO MARKETERS CONTACT THE VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE COMMUNITY?

"Marketing is not a peripheral activity of modern organizations," Kotler and Andreasen (1987:36) stress, "but one that grows out of the essential quest of modern organizations to effectively serve some area of human need. To survive and succeed, organizations must know their markets." When educators are asked to identify their

market, a common response is, "the community."

The concept of community, however, is ambiguous. It can, for example, refer to a specific location, as the Palm Springs community; or an ethnic body with a cultural identity, as the Hispanic community; or a body of people with a technological identify, as the scientific community (Getzels, 1979:101). Within each of these "communities" are subsets of other communities (e. g., Hispanics within the scientific community) thus complicating the concept even further.

When considering the field of education, there are so many communities that the concept is almost rendered useless. Rather, it is more productive to speak of markets, market segments, and target markets. In the field of education, just as in the private sector, a clear identification of target markets to be served is central to any marketing activity (Wise, et al., 1986:5).

Market Segmentation and Target Marketing

Organizations can respond to their markets in two ways: ignore the differences in consumer needs and preferences and use a mass marketing approach; or, adapt to the differences and use market segmentation followed by target marketing (Rados, 1981:2). The first approach assumes a "homogenized" view of the families, is more inexpensive and easier to deliver than the second. Mass marketing is convenient when the clients, no matter how different their tastes and needs, have nowhere else to turn. While mass marketing is the dominant model in education, market segmentation and target marketing are best suited to contacting specific populations.

The underlying premise behind market segmentation is quite simple; that is, people are different with different needs and organizations must respond to them as such. In its most basic form, a market segment is a grouping of people with a similar characteristic that may be important to the serving organization, such as age, economic status, educational level, social status, number of children, and political power.

Kotler and Andreasen (1987:120) point out that the process of market segmentation involves three tasks.

(1) Identifying the bases for segmenting the market. That is, what are the those special characteristics in people that might have some special importance for the school? At risk families? Exceptional children? Limited English speakers? Community leaders? High/low socioeconomic status of families?

(2) Developing profiles of resulting segments. That is, what does the collection of characteristics look like of those individuals who fall in a specific market segment.

(3) Developing measures of segment attractiveness. That is, how great is the need for specific programs for specific groups, and how accessible are the groups?

Following market segmentation comes target marketing, a task that is essential in education because, unlike the psychologist, educators cannot "customize" their product to the specific needs of each individual. Educational targets are conceptualized as parents, students (as extensions of their parents) or members of other market segments.

Target marketing (Kotler and Andreasen, (1987:120) also comes in three stages.

1. Selecting the target markets. Magmer and Russell (1980:6) stress that because resources are limited, educators must choose between "priority publics" based on specific marketing goals.

2. Positioning a program for each priority target market. Positioning calls for shaping existing programs, or developing new ones, to meet the requirements of target markets.

3. Developing marketing mix for each target market. A marketing mix involves the final menu to be offered which involves: program or project (e.g., a new language laboratory, land purchase for a new school); cost (e.g., per item expenditure); distribution (e.g., which market segment is to get what); and promotion (e.g., communication messages and channels).

The key to developing a productive marketing mix is having first conducted an insightful market analysis.

Market Analysis

Ongoing market analysis is essential in the field of education because of the rapid changes in the demographic and economic characteristics taking place in market segments all across America. Gotts and Purnell (1986:175) argue that it is especially important to increase our awareness and understanding of "(1) families with low socioeconomic status, (2) single parent families, (3) two-job families, (4) families with chronically ill or handicapped children, (5) isolated rural families, and (6) minority

families."

A brief look at the changing demographics at the national level signals the importance in monitoring market shifts at the local level (Census Bureau data as reported in CDF, 1990:3-5). Between the end of the 1980s and the year 2030, the size of the student population between 10 and 24 will remain basically unchanged. However, the percentage of Latino youths will grow by almost 80 percent (two-thirds of whom live in California, Texas and New York), Black young people by 14 percent, and White young people will decline by 10 percent.

Only four of 10 Latino teens live in a family headed by a parent who graduated from high school. For every 10 Latino youths who graduated from high school in 1988, there were six dropouts. Half of the Latino dropouts did not complete the ninth grade. In order to respond rapidly to the changing socio-economic, educational and language requirements, the adoption of marketing tools of data gathering and analysis will be of the utmost importance.

A significant but unanswered question in the research literature is, how much market segmentation and target marketing goes on in education? While the private school literature pay considerable attention to these processes (Stamoulis, 1988), the public school literature is nearly silent on the topics. Perhaps that in itself is an answer of sorts. However in some specific areas, especially where state or federal laws are in effect, market segmentation and target marketing can be found, such as with parents of the handicapped or Chapter One children.

As the next section will point out, communicating with market segments is an

essential task during and after market analysis.

HOW DO SCHOOLS ATTEMPT TO COMMUNICATE WITH COMMUNITIES AND VICE VERSA?

There are many components to an effective school--community segments communication process. Among them are, for example: (1) purpose of communication (e.g., to inform, pursuade, elicit a decision, seek client feedback); (2) means of communication (e.g., instruments and channels used; (3) message transmitted (e.g., content and format); and (4) effect desired, (e.g., meetings attended, bond issue passed) (Hanson, 1991: ch. 9; Kotler and Fox, 1985:212).

In education, a major function of communication is to facilitate an effective and fair exchange of valued, but scarce, goods and services between schools and communities. What that generally means is that the right community segments get the necessary information in an understandable form at the appropriate time. If these tasks are to be carried out effectively, schools must develop well thought out marketing solutions for solving problems. For better or worse, how does the literature describe the marketing solutions found in schools today?

Across the nation the communication channels in use to capture attention by school systems range from the traditional (e.g., teacher notes to parents, PTA brochures) to the unconventional (e.g., slogans on grocery bags, back-of-the-bus-signs) (Rich, 1988:91; NSPRA, 1987, ch. 4). A regional favorite in southern California was once the launching of metallic foil balloons with the school name printed across the surface (that is until one landed on a half-million dollar power transformer and

burned it out).

Adults with no children in school typically use different sources of information to make judgments about educational systems than do parents with children in school. A Gallup Poll (Gallup and Elam, 1988:43) reports that adults with no children in school tend to rely on newspapers (55 %), followed by radio and/television (36%) and students (29%) to evaluate the quality of local schools. On the other hand, parents with students in school rely on their own children as their best source (57%) of information, then newspapers (46%) followed by parents of other students (41%).

In studies that provide parents more options to select, they tend to receive most of their information, in order of degree, from their students, printed material from school (e.g., report cards, newsletters, fliers), and personal contact with the school (Cattermole and Robinson, 1985; Melaragno, 1981:49; Stough, 1982). However, in a study involving 1,200 single parents across the country, less than 10 percent of the noncustodial parents reported receiving school publications as report cards and notices of school activities (Clay, 1981).

Newsletters

The most frequently received and preferred written communication from, and about, the school is the school newsletter. As students move through the school years, the school newsletter becomes increasingly important to parents because parent communication with the school becomes less physical and personal and more symbolic and abstract (Gotts and Purnell, 1986:179).

There are some interesting caveats reported in various studies regarding the newsletter. A study of San Diego high schools reported that satisfied parents were more likely to receive their information from their students and the school-bulletins/newsletters and visits, while dissatisfied parents tended to receive their information from other parents and general group meetings in the community (Stough, 1982).

A survey of 72 high school parents representing three distinct occupational groups found that parents were considerably more interested in reading about academic and guidance activities in the school than management, staff and support program activities. The parents were also more interested in information about the school's needs and problems than its strengths (Marnix, 1971).

In a study of four federal programs, "in almost all instances written communication was one-way in nature, carrying information from the school/project to the home." Only in rare instances was there ever a request for written or oral feedback, let along any prepared space to fill in and return on the communication item itself (Melaragno, 1981:49).

In studies of two West Virginia high schools, an evaluation was made as to whether or not parents actually read the newsletters. Purness and Gotts (1983) found that less than 10 percent of the parents at each school failed to read the newsletters. The distribution of the newsletter, Magmer and Russell (1980:19) point out, can become an important communication contact with the larger community, such as business officials, community leaders, and school alumni.

Given the importance of school newsletters as major vehicles of educational marketing, the research literature remains strangely silent about their quality, content and distribution. For example, who writes the newsletters? Are the writers trained? Do they contain different message focuses for the different segments of the market? To what market segments are the newsletters distributed? Does newsletter preparation tend to employ the benefits of computer desk-top publishing? With respect to overall quality, how would they be rated?

Communicating With Limited English-Speaking Parents

Perhaps more than any other body of parents, the non English-speaking poor encounter the greatest barriers, both personal and institutional, to engaging in an effective working relationship with the schools (Cavazos, 1989; CDF, 1990; Nicolau and Ramos, 1990).

Surveying numerous leaders of projects attempting to draw poor Hispanic parents into parent/school partnerships, Nicolau and Ramos (1990:19) report on a wide assortment of strategies (e.g., newspaper articles, telephone calls, flyers, child-made invitations, Spanish-language posters) that were largely unsuccessful to get the parents to attend a first meeting. A single home visit did not do the trick, but often required three or four visits. "The personal approach, which means talking face to face with the parents, in their primary language, at their homes, or at the school...was the strategy deemed most effective by 98 percent of the project coordinators."

Bridge (1978:383) stresses the point that parents' information level tends to

mirror directly the quality of the school's information distribution system. Because most schools rarely translate much of the written information going home, or provide translations at parent meetings (e.g., PTA, parent-teacher conference), it should be no surprise that these parents are the last to learn what is going on and initiate an informed response (Delgado-Gaitan, 1990:135).

Reaching low socio-economic status (SES), limited English speaking parents can best be achieved by using multiple channels of communication that include written translations, face-to-face meetings, use of respected opinion leaders within the informal cultural networks, and a bridging person who belongs to both the school and the community. Time and persistence are also required (Bridge, 1978; Lightfoot, 1981; Litwak, E. and Meyer, 1974)

In any marketing program, effective communication between school and community must be two-way if a productive exchange process is to be established. Unfortunately, considerably less is known about the community to school communication process than the flow in the opposite direction. This deficiency may well reflect the priority it holds in educational marketing.

A Canadian survey of 215 parents in 36 schools asked parents about the most effective methods of communicating with schools. Of 20 possible methods, parents by far placed at the top of the list direct personal contact by phone or in person, or through parent/teacher conferences. At the bottom of the list were indirect means as filling in survey questionnaires, participating in school activities as fund raising, or attending meetings. Contacting board members and sending messages with their

children fell in the middle range (Cattermole and Robinson, 1985).

SUMMARY

In sum, the marketing process is a mechanism intended to draw schools and their communities into productive and supportive working relationships. Unlike the private sector, within the field of education natural market forces creating such working relationships are virtually inoperative. The consequences, on the one side, have been inadequate citizen participation as well as insufficient school funding at the local, state, and national levels. On the other side, schools that are slow to change in response to shifting community needs. The slow response rate is especially true in terms of the special needs of low SES and culturally different families.

As demonstrated in the national surveys, the American public is generally quite willing and prepared to support the social and economic requirements of schools, but as yet clear and convincing reasons to do so have not been forthcoming. What do come forth are stuttering and confusing messages that do not match the information needs of specific audiences.

In order to stimulate a more productive school-community exchange process, educational systems would benefit by developing ongoing marketing strategies. Such strategies will necessarily involve numerous components, such as: the tools of demographic data gathering and diagnosis, decision-making processes that can make change related choices based on shared views of school-community needs, and information distribution plans (e.g., who gets what, when, through which channels) based on market segmentation and target marketing procedures.

There is no reason why educators should not look increasingly toward adopting policies involving the introduction of proven marketing technologies and procedures that can lead to strengthening the exchange processes between schools and their communities. To do less is deny the schools access to valuable tools for shifting away from the problematic status quo in the field of education.

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